**Policy Statement**

**Stella Maris Aged Care Facility Voluntary Assisted Dying**

From 28 November 2023 access to a Voluntary Assisted Dying substance was made available to people in New South Wales who meet strict eligibility criteria. Under the Voluntary Assisted Dying Act 2022 (VAD) (New South Wales), entities in New South Wales can choose whether or not to provide Voluntary Assisted Dying services, with the understanding that there are obligations under the Act in relation to providing a person with access to information and independent practitioners.

Inspired by the Catholic tradition, Stella Maris Aged Care Facility ‘promotes life in all its fullness through the provision of residential aged care. We believe that every person is precious and has intrinsic dignity that exists at every stage of life.  As such Stella Maris cannot promote or facilitate treatments or action where the primary purpose is to terminate life.

Stella Maris Aged Care Facility is therefore opposed to the VAD legislation, and its people will not participate in or facilitate Voluntary Assisted Dying services within any of our programs or services. However, Stella Maris Aged Care Facility will meet all our legislative obligations and part of this is not obstructing access to VAD based on any request made by residents. We will do so in a compassionate and caring way and always treat our residents with dignity.

We strongly believe there are alternative ways to support people who are nearing end of life, specifically high quality palliative care.

While Stella Maris does not support the VAD legislation, we respect the rights of our residents and will continue to love, care and support them, irrespective of their actions in regard to the difficult area.

**Principles**

* Stella Maris Aged Care Facility will ensure that it has the resources and capability to deliver or access quality, respectful and compassionate Palliative Care and End of Life Care, supporting each person we support to live and value each day to the maximum extent possible, or will facilitate referral to these services as appropriate.
* Stella Maris Aged Care Facility will ensure that residents are made aware of Stella Maris Aged Care Facility’s position on VAD, that is Stella Maris Aged Care Facility will not be participating in VAD. Should residents request information on VAD they will be provided with written information on end-of-life and palliative care services that Stella Maris Aged Care Facility is able to make available and contact details for the NSW VAD Care Navigator Service.  Contact information for specific VAD services will not be included.
* Stella Maris Aged Care Facility will ensure that appropriate structures are in place to provide pathways and support for our Stella Maris Aged Care Facility people and the residents.
* Stella Maris Aged Care Facility will ensure that trained representatives are available to engage in end-of-life discussions and that processes are in place to respond to the results of these discussions.
* Stella Maris Aged Care Facility will publish this Policy Statement on its website to clearly state its position in opposition to the VAD legislation and the fact that we will not participate in or facilitate Voluntary Assisted Dying services.
* Stella Maris Aged Care Facility will ensure that our people are aware of Stella Maris Aged Care Facility’s position on VAD, and the requirements of them in not supporting any resident participating in or facilitating VAD Services.

This specifically requires that:

* Stella Maris Aged Care Facility staff will not initiate discussions about Voluntary Assisted Dying with the residents.
* If asked about VAD our staff will remind the resident or family member about Stella Maris Aged Care Facility’s position in relation to VAD and then will escalate the request to an appropriately trained representative.

**Definitions**

In this policy statement, the following words have the following meanings:

**Palliative Care:**
an approach that seeks to improve the quality of life of residents (and their families) who are facing difficulties with life-threatening illness through the prevention and relief of suffering (whether this suffering is physical, psychological and/or spiritual) by means of early identification, assessment and treatment of pain and other difficulties.

**End of Life Care:**
includes physical, spiritual and psychosocial assessment, care and treatment delivered by health professionals and ancillary Stella Maris Aged Care Facility people, and support for families and carers, and care of the persons’ body after their death.

**Voluntary Assisted Dying:**
the administration of a voluntary assisted dying substance and includes steps reasonably related to that administration.

Approved by the Stella Maris Board (xxxxx).